

# WASHINGTON'S SPRING FESTIVAL

## GREEK PAGEANT-DRAMA "THE FIRE REGAINED"



SIDNEY M. HIRSCH  
AUTHOR OF DRAMA



THE SHEPHERD  
VICTORIOUS AFTER  
BATTLE WITH THE  
DEMONS

THE RACE FOR THE LIFE OF THE TEMPLE MAID

### AMPHITHEATER TO HOLD THROGS AT PAGEANT PLAY TAKING ITS FORM

Under the Hammers of Carpenters, Great Building Is  
Going Up at Sixteenth Street for  
Greek Drama.

WILL HAVE SEATING  
CAPACITY OF 6,000

Performance Strictly Wash-  
ington Performance, with  
1,500 Participants, Drawn  
Largely from Society Set  
of Capital.

At the present time in Washington, at the corner of Sixteenth and V streets there is being erected a large amphitheater with a seating capacity of 6,000. This theater, with its stage in the form of a semi-circle, will have a background of huge pillars and the accompanying effects to take on the appearance of the old Greek Parthenon, and on its Sidney M. Hirsch's drama, "The Fire Regained," will be presented for seven performances on May 16 to May 23.

The pageant is strictly a Washington proposition, backed and promoted by local men, and the fifteen hundred participants who are to take part are people who live in Washington. The only outside features, if any, will be the racing chariots, two teams of four horses each, that during the action of the play are brought in for a real race scene, one team driven by a young woman and one team by a young man. Everything else is carried out by local persons, with a large chorus of some 600 that is under the direction of Percy S. Foster. The wood nymphs, priests, and priestesses, vestal virgins, satyrs, etc., comprise nearly 1,000 people, and are at present being rehearsed daily at the old Builders' Exchange. It may sound somewhat sordid to mention finances in connection with a festival that is to be so artistic, but when one learns that the preparation expenses are to be about \$20,000, some idea of the magnitude of the undertaking may be grasped.

Author Is Versatile.

Mr. Hirsch, author of "The Fire Regained," is a student, traveler, journal-

ist, author, playwright, lecturer, philosopher, Orientalist, linguist, and art critic, and is eminently fitted for the work he has taken up in Greek mythology, as he has visited every part of Greece and knows every foot of the old ruins and their history as well as the mythology. His poetry, his books, and articles that have appeared in all the big magazines of the day have given him a rank among the foremost in literature and art.

The first scene of "The Fire Regained" opens with a shepherd guarding his flock, and presently he falls asleep. Then appear wood nymphs and dryads, who, in their dancing are the poetry of motion. They are pursued by pans and satyrs, and finally take to flight.

To the shepherd in his dreams come three muses, bearing gifts, which they bestow with a kiss. From Euterpe he receives the gift of harmony. Thus he will have singleness of purpose and not be at war with himself. Through Calliope he is recast into heroic mould, and from Polyhymnia comes the knowledge of the divine. Upon awakening, he exclaims:

"And the fire they brought that fires to whitest light,

That purged my dross, refined, ye attendants, appears before the altar and seeks the will of the gods, in regard to the maiden. When a voice returns a mystic answer, he causes all priests and priestesses to be summoned. In the ceremonies that follow, the male chorus constantly demands justice and the female chorus pleads for mercy. Demons come from the underworld and through their weird incantations try to detect the guilty maiden. When one of the number becomes hysterical, her guilt is apparently confirmed, and she is condemned to death.

In the meantime, the high priest, with attendants, appears before the altar and seeks the will of the gods, in regard to the maiden. When a voice returns a mystic answer, he causes all priests and priestesses to be summoned. In the ceremonies that follow, the male chorus constantly demands justice and the female chorus pleads for mercy. Demons come from the underworld and through their weird incantations try to detect the guilty maiden. When one of the number becomes hysterical, her guilt is apparently confirmed, and she is condemned to death.

However, Athens decrees that the maiden's guilt or innocence shall be established by ordeal. First is the ordeal of the doves. The thirty maidens each loosen two white doves tied with white streamers, and the priests set free the same number of black pigeons. They dart hither and thither, flying neither to the right for innocence, nor to the left for guilt. Next the maidens bring in white sheep, and the priests bring in black rams, which are allowed to graze. Near them burning brands are stuck into the ground, with the hope that the direction of the smoke will give the answer. Then comes the thrilling

ONE OF THE THIRTY VIRGINS IS ACCUSED  
OF TREASON TO VOWS

THE FINALE—  
THE FIRE IS REGAINED

ATHENS RESURRECTS  
THE SHEPHERD FROM  
THE DEAD

THE TEMPLE MAIDS BESECH MERCY

chariot race. Four white horses are driven by a white-robed maiden, and four black chargers by a black-garbed priest. Finally the black wins, and despair seizes the virgins.

#### Execution Is Halted.

When the time for execution arrives, there is a procession of priests, maidens, and attendants, singing the death chant. The one who is doomed is bound upon the back of an ox, led by four Numidian slaves. The high priest purifies his sword in water, air, fire, and earth, and is just ready to make the sacrifice when Hermes appears on the top of the Parthenon, and with mighty voice stays the proceedings. From high Olympus he has seen five runners, and they are nearing their goal.

The three runners of the Furies are ahead, and they enter, hideous of aspect. When near the maiden, they begin fighting among themselves and all sink to the ground. The Fire god's representative comes limping. He falls from weariness, but attempts to crawl forward. Athene's messenger comes last, and he, too, is exhausted. The fiery one regains his feet and lifts his hammer to strike him. The latter raises Athene's shield, and the Fire god's runner, seeing his own reflection in it, is overcome. As he drops his hammer it is seized by the goody youth, who strikes the rock. The spark thus generated, kindles the altar anew, and "fire is regained." The youth releases the maiden, who is really Athene herself. She mounts to the altar and stands triumphant in the midst of the flame.

Words will not do justice to Mr. Hirsch's work. One could not witness the pageant without being elevated to unusual heights. There is the sense of fitness of things in the vastness and simplicity of the setting in keeping with the perfect proportions of the Parthenon. There will be the feeling of being close to nature, as the sheep graze in quiet content, as the doves circle in the air and finally alight on the Parthenon. There will be an aesthetic delight produced by the graceful movements, of Washington's own daughters, in the classic robes, with garlands of flowers. There will be a realization of man being ruled by the divine in the conflict between justice and mercy.

#### Popularity World-wide.

For those who delight in music, the choruses will be of interest. A special score has been arranged by Mr. F. Arthur Henkel, and the musical numbers, led by Mr. Foster, and accompanied by a large orchestra of half a hundred instruments, will add to the drama, as well as the huge spectacular features, and the thrilling chariot races on the circuit course around the Parthenon and directly in front of the audience in the amphitheater of the semi-circle.

The entire country has apparently gone in for their pageant seasons, and all over the continent as well as abroad the pageants are becoming a yearly relaxation to pleasure, an amusement to be enjoyed out in the open air.

While the festivities are going on here, a second Greek drama, entitled "The Mysteries of Thanatos," also by Mr. Hirsch, is being produced in Nashville, Tenn., where "The Fire Regained" was first tried out as a pageant and was found to be so successful that it promises to become a yearly institution there.

In St. Louis there is a large pageant in action entitled "The St. Louis Pageant and Mosque," in which the different scenes in the various stages of the city's historic development are depicted, but there are few cities that will attempt a pageant on so large a scale as "The Fire Regained."

Reservations for seats show a general interest is felt for 150 miles around Washington, for mail orders have been received from Richmond, Norfolk, Annapolis, Baltimore, and York, Pa.